

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in this application.

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A messaging system comprising:
a web server computer; and
at least two video game systems executing respective game programs, each video game system being configured to connect to said web server computer via the Internet and to communicate status data indicative of a game played on the video game system ~~an activity engaged in~~ by a user thereof,

wherein said web server computer generates a session file when a given video game system user connects thereto, the session file comprising status data of the given user and status data of each of two or more other video game system users identified on a buddy list defined by the given user, and

wherein the status data of the other users on the buddy list is accessible to the given user even if the given user and the other users are playing different games ~~engaged in different activities~~.

Claim 2 (Previously Presented): The system according to claim 1, wherein the status data for each user further indicates whether that user is online and able to send/receive messages.

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): The system according to claim 1, wherein the status data for each user further indicates whether that user is online, but not able to send/receive messages.

Claim 4 (Previously Presented): The system according to claim 1, wherein the status data for each user further indicates whether that user is online and able to send, but not receive, messages.

Claim 5 (Original): The system according to claim 1, wherein the web server computer stores user profiles for each of the users.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented): The system according to claim 5, wherein each user can configure the accessibility of the user's profile to other users.

Claim 7 (Previously Presented): The system according to claim 5, wherein a system administrator can configure the accessibility of each user's profile to other users.

Claim 8 (Original): The system according to claim 1, wherein said web server computer is responsive to a user-supplied request for communicating to that user an identification of all buddy lists on which the user appears.

Claim 9 (Original): The system according to claim 8, wherein said web server computer is further responsive to a user-supplied request for deleting that user's name from one or more other user's buddy lists.

Claim 10 (Currently Amended): A portable memory medium having stored thereon an application executable by processing circuitry of a video game system connected to a communication network, the application comprising both video game program code for a video game and messaging service program code for a messaging service for communicating messages to other messaging service users connected to the communication network, whereby the messaging service is accessible when the application is executed by the processing circuitry of the video game system ~~in a non-multi-tasking mode.~~

Claim 11 (Original): The portable memory medium according to claim 10, wherein the portable memory medium comprises an optical memory medium.

Claim 12 (Original): The portable memory medium according to claim 10, wherein the portable memory medium comprises a magnetic memory medium.

Claim 13 (Original): The portable memory medium according to claim 10, wherein the portable memory medium comprises a semiconductor memory medium.

Claim 14 (Original): The portable memory medium according to claim 10, wherein the video game system is a hand-held game system, and the portable memory medium is adapted for operative coupling to the hand-held game system.

Claim 15 (Original): The portable memory medium according to claim 10, wherein the video game system is a video game console connected to a television, and the portable memory medium is adapted for operative coupling to the video game console.

Claim 16 (Original): The portable memory medium according to claim 10, wherein the communication network is the Internet.

Claim 17 (Original): The portable memory medium according to claim 10, wherein the messaging service program code includes a user registration routine for registering a user as a user of the messaging service.

Claim 18 (Original): The portable memory medium according to claim 10, wherein the messaging service program code includes a user profile routine for creating a user profile.

Claim 19 (Original): The portable memory medium according to claim 18, wherein the messaging service program code further includes a preferences routine for setting access limitations to the user profile.

Claim 20 (Original): The portable memory medium according to claim 18, wherein the user profile includes a customized image comprising user-selected features.

Claim 21 (Original): The portable memory medium according to claim 18, wherein the user profile includes a digital image of the user.

Claim 22 (Original): The portable memory medium according to claim 10, wherein the messaging service program code includes a buddy list routine for creating a user buddy list.

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Claim 23 (Original): The portable memory medium according to claim 22, wherein the messaging service program code further includes a preferences routine for setting a buddy sign-on alert to provide an alert to the user when a buddy on the buddy list signs onto the messaging service.

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Claim 24 (Original): The portable memory medium according to claim 22, wherein the messaging service program code further includes a preferences routine for setting a buddy sign-off alert to provide an alert to the user when a buddy on the buddy list signs off the messaging service.

Claim 25 (Previously Presented): The portable memory medium according to claim 10, wherein the messaging service program code includes a preferences routine for setting a message alert to provide an alert to a user when a message is received.

Claim 26 (Previously Presented): The portable memory medium according to claim 10, wherein the messaging service program code includes an auto-start routine for automatically logging a user into the messaging service.

Claim 27 (Previously Presented): The portable memory medium according to claim 10, wherein the messaging service program code includes a start routine for

logging a user into the messaging service as being engaged in a particular activity on the video game system.

Claim 28 (Currently Amended): A video game system, comprising:
processing circuitry for executing applications ~~in a non-multi-tasking mode~~;
a communication circuit that, in use, connects the video game system to a communication network; and

a connector that, in use, connects to a portable storage medium storing an application that comprises both video game program code for a video game and messaging service program code for a messaging service for communicating messages to other message service users connected to the communication network, whereby the messaging service is accessible when the stored application is executed by the processing circuitry ~~in the non-multi-tasking mode~~.

Claim 29 (Previously Presented): A video game machine comprising:
an application program executing system for executing an application program comprising a video game and a messaging service client; and

a communication circuit for connecting over a communication network to a server computer,

wherein a video game machine user can use the messaging service client to communicate with other users connected to the server computer while the application program is executed by the application program executing system.

Claim 30 (Previously Presented): The video game machine according to claim 29, wherein the other users are selected from a user-definable list.

Claim 31 (Previously Presented): The video game machine according to claim 29, wherein the messaging service client provides status data of the other users connected to the server computer.

Claim 32 (Previously Presented): The video game machine according to claim 29, wherein the application program executing system is embodied in a hand-held housing.

Claim 33 (Previously Presented): The video game machine according to claim 29, wherein the application program executing system is embodied in a console.

Claim 34 (Previously Presented): The video game machine according to claim 29, wherein the messaging service client comprises a user registration routine for registering a user as a user of the messaging service.

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Claim 35 (Previously Presented): The video game machine according to claim 29, wherein the messaging service client comprises a user profile routine for creating a user profile.

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Claim 36 (Previously Presented): The video game machine according to claim 29, wherein the messaging service client comprises a user preferences routine for setting user preferences.

Claim 37 (Previously Presented): The video game machine according to claim 29, wherein the messaging service client comprises an auto-start routine for automatically logging the user into the messaging service.

Claim 38 (Previously Presented): The video game machine according to claim 29, wherein the messaging service client comprises a start routine for logging the user into the messaging service as being engaged in a particular activity on the video game system.

Claim 39 (New): A messaging service client incorporated into a video game program executed by a video game machine to play a video game, the messaging service client comprising instructions executable by the video game machine for:

contacting a server computer over a communication network;
sending identities of the video game and a player playing the video game to the contacted server computer;
receiving buddy list data from the contacted server computer, the buddy list data comprising identities of other players and games that the other players are playing; and
generating a display based on the received buddy list data.

Claim 40 (New): The messaging service client according to claim 39, comprising further instructions executable by the video game machine for:
receiving a message from another player while the player is playing the video game.

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Claim 41 (New): The messaging service client according to claim 40, comprising further instructions executable by the video game machine for:
providing a prompt to the player that the message has been received.

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Claim 42 (New): The messaging service client according to claim 41, comprising further instructions executable by the video game machine for:
suspending playing of the video game and displaying the message in response to one or more player inputs.

Claim 43 (New): The messaging service client according to claim 39, comprising further instructions executable by the video game machine for:
receiving e-mail notifications from the player's e-mail service indicating that e-mail messages have been received.

Claim 44 (New): The messaging service client according to claim 39, comprising further instructions executable by the video game machine for:
receiving and storing player preference data that is referenced when the messaging service client is executed.

Claim 45 (New): The messaging service client according to claim 39, comprising further instructions executable by the video game machine for:
generating a buddy list in response to inputs from the player.

Claim 46 (New): The messaging service client according to claim 39, wherein the video game program having the messaging service client is provided on a portable storage medium.

Claim 47 (New): A storage device having executable instructions for implementing the messaging service client according to claim 39.

Claim 48 (New): A server process for a game network server comprising instructions executable by a server processing system for:

receiving identifiers of players and video games played by the players from a plurality of game machines executing respective video game programs;

logging the players onto the game network server;

for each of one or more of the logged-on players, determining whether that logged-on player has a buddy list of other players and, if so, determining which players on the buddy list are currently logged-in and what games those players are playing; and
sending to each of the one or more logged-on players, the identities of the players on the buddy list that are currently logged-in and the games that those players are playing.

Claim 49 (New): The server process according to claim 48, comprising further instructions executable by the server processing system for:

supplying messages received from one logged-in player to another logged-in player.

Claim 50 (New): The server process according to claim 48, comprising further instructions executable by the server processing system for:

setting up text-based chat sessions between two or more logged-in players.

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Claim 51 (New): The server process according to claim 48, comprising further instructions executable by the server processing system for:
setting up voice-based chat sessions between two or more logged-in players.

Claim 52 (New): A storage device having executable instructions for implementing the server process according to claim 48.
